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ABSTRACT

Resilience is an important trait because it is the human capacity to face, overcome, be strengthened by, and even transformed by the adversities of life. This guide provides ways to promote resilience in children and help them learn to improve many aspects of their own resilience. The guide is centered on three features, or sources, of resilience: "I HAVE," "I AM," and "I CAN." The guide presents a framework for the development of children, offering resilience features on each age and examples of actions that do and do not promote resilience, according to the following age ranges: (1) birth through 3 years; (2) 4 through 7 years; and (3) 8 through 11 years. Four appendices provide examples of the three sources of resilience (I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN), ways to think about resilience, a form for feedback, and a comment sheet on how the guide was used. The Spanish version is attached. Contains 26 references. (AP)

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# A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit

by
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The International Resilience Project

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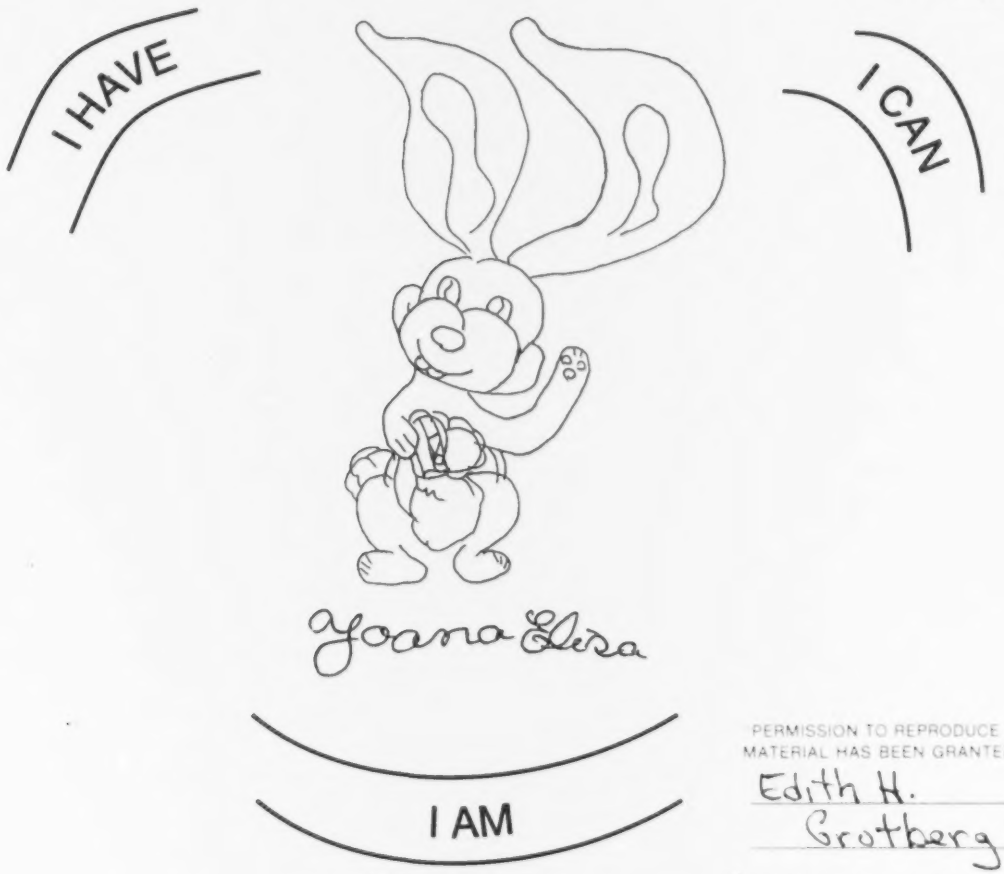


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8 year old girl from Portugal
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What would resilient children do when faced with these adversities: He is at school when an earthquake hits; She is taunted and sometimes pushed by some older children as she goes to school; He sees his father stabbed; Her mother has gone to another town to get a job and did not tell her when they would be reunited.

## THREE SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

To overcome adversities, children draw from three sources of resilience features labelled: I HAVE, I AM, I CAN. What they draw from each of the three sources may be described as follows:

### I HAVE

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what

People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble

People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things

People who want me to learn to do things on my own

People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

### I AM

A person people can like and love

Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern

Respectful of myself and others

Willing to be responsible for what I do

Sure things will be all right

### I CAN

Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me

Find ways to solve problems that I face

Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous

Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

Find someone to help me when I need it

A resilient child does not need all of these features to be resilient, but one is not enough. A child may be loved (I HAVE), but if he or she has no inner strength (I AM) or social, interpersonal skills (I CAN), there can be no resilience. A child may have a great deal of self-esteem (I AM), but if he or she does not know how to communicate with others or solve problems (I CAN), and has no one to help him or her (I HAVE), the child is not resilient. A child may be very verbal and speak well (I CAN), but if he or she has no empathy (I AM) or does not learn from role models (I HAVE), there is no resilience. Resilience results from a combination of these features.

These features of resilience may seem obvious and easy to acquire; but they are not. In fact, most children are not resilient and most parents and other caregivers do not help children become resilient. On the contrary, too many adults crush or impede resilience in children or give mixed messages, and too many children feel helpless, sad and not fully loved. This is not the situation necessarily out of intent; it is more the fact that people do not know about resilience or how to promote it in children.

Children need to become resilient to overcome the many adversities they face and will face in life: they cannot do it alone. They need adults who know how to promote resilience and are, indeed, becoming more resilient themselves.

IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is important because it is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life. Everyone faces adversities; no one is exempt. Adversities can be from outside the family, like robberies, war, fire, earthquakes, floods, car accidents, loss of a job, murders and famine. Adversities can be from inside the family, like death, divorce or separation, illness, poverty, moving, physical or sexual abuse, homelessness, murder.

How parents and other caregivers respond to situations and how they help a child to respond separates adults who promote resilience in their children from those who destroy resilience or send confusing messages that both promote and inhibit resilience.

There are many, many accounts of children and adults facing and overcoming adversities in their lives in spite of the fact that their circumstances suggested they would be overcome by the adversities. Here are some real experiences people have had . Using the I HAVE, I AM, I CAN model, here is what they did that would promote resilience in the process of overcoming the adversity.

A 5 year old boy comes home and tells his mother this:

"This big boy keeps bullying me. He hits me and sometimes he kicks me. I tell him to stop and he does for awhile and then he starts again. I'm really scared of him."

The mother can draw on I HAVE features of People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what, and People who help me when I am in danger; the I AM features of the child can be strengthened by seeing him or herself as a Person to be liked and loved, and Sure things will be all right; the I CAN features of the child include Talking to others about things that frighten or bother me, and Finding someone to help me when I need it.

The interaction between the mother and boy was like this: The mother listened to him and told him how sorry she was and comforted him. Then she said he was right to tell the teacher and he may want to do that every time the boy bothers him until it stops. She offers to talk to the teacher or to the boy's parents, but wants her son to develop an increasing sense of being independent and so does not want to insist. The boy has felt free to share his feelings and to listen to solutions to the problem. He sees he is part of the solution and wants to learn further what he can do.

Here is another example:

An eleven year old girl tells about this experience:

"My cousin and I were hiking in the mountains in the winter. I fell into deep snow and could not get out. I was very frightened.

The girl can draw on the I HAVE resilience feature of People who help me when I am in danger; the I AM features of Willing to be responsible for what I do, and Sure things will be all right: the I CAN features of Find ways to solve problems that I face, and Find someone to help me when I need it.

The interaction between the girl and the cousin was like this: the girl tried on her own to get out of the deep snow and could not. She then called to her cousin who was way ahead and asked her for help. When her cousin came they talked about the fears they were both feeling, but decided they had better get busy and dig the girl out. They succeeded and felt they had had enough excitement for one day, so went home.

WHAT WILL THIS GUIDE DO FOR YOU?

This Guide intends to help you in the challenging and exciting task of promoting resilience in your children. You, like most parents and other caregivers, want your children to be able to face adversity, overcome it, and, indeed, be strengthened or even transformed by the experience. Some adversities can be avoided but everyone faces adversities as part of life, either in a crisis situation or as a chronic condition. Resilient children can draw on the inner strengths (I AM) you help them develop, can

draw on the social and interpersonal skills (I CAN) you help them learn, and can draw on the resources and supports you or others make available (I HAVE). And, in the process, they are learning to promote their own resilience.

Children are not independent of their setting. They are within families, within schools and within the community and the larger society. And even though much could be said about promoting resilience in parents, in teachers, in communities and in societies, this Guide focuses on promoting resilience in children. These parents, teachers, communities and societies are essential to promoting resilience in children, so attention is centered on the child, but in his or her setting.

This Guide will help you learn about ways to promote resilience in your children and help them learn to promote many aspects of their own resilience. You will learn that ways to promote resilience involve drawing from the resilience features in different combinations and by changing the combinations if one way does not seem to be working. You will have more information on the actions associated with the resilience features, and examples of resilient and non-resilient responses from adults and children to the same presented situations. Finally, you will have this information organized around three age groups: the first three years of life; 4 through 7; and 8 through 11. You may want to go to the age group of interest to you or you may find reading each age group helpful for you and your children.

Children develop over time at different rates and so some information may be appropriate for younger or older children not necessarily within their chronological age group. One common factor for all age groups, however, is that the child is the test for whether or not you are promoting resilience faster than he or she can handle, whether the child is comfortable with what you are doing, understands what you are doing, or is learning what you are teaching and encouraging. The response of the child is the touchstone about the effectiveness of what the parent or other caregiver is doing to promote resilience in the child.

## CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH THREE

Framework for their development

Infants and toddlers are developing and learning about trust and autonomy. They learn to trust the caregivers to give them love and help and to take care of them when hungry, wet, need love and comfort, are afraid, or are angry. These little ones learn to trust their own ability to work out a rhythm of eating, sleeping, washing, etc., and to calm themselves and better control their bodies.

They learn to roll over, get up, walk, play, and to use their hands to manipulate and create. They increasingly have a feeling of being a separate person and try to do many things on their own, often to the concern and frustration of the caregivers.

Making mistakes can be either a learning experience or a shameful one for infants and toddlers. If these little ones cannot learn to do things and the caregivers do not provide help, they will learn to mistrust themselves, the caregivers, and the world. If toddlers cannot become autonomous, are not allowed to make mistakes or are criticized for trying to do things on their own, they will feel shame and begin to doubt their own abilities.

This, then, is the framework within which young children can learn to become resilient. These are also the limits that parents and other caregivers must work within as they promote resilience in their young children these first three years. It may be helpful to: 1. describe the resilience features of Three Year Olds; 2. present examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting actions; 3. provide suggestions of what caregivers can do to promote resilience in these little ones; and 4. provide a portrait of a resilient three year old.

1. Resilience Features of Three Year Olds

The I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN resilience features presented at the beginning of the Guide are primarily statements and do not present the resilience features in actions, feelings, and experiences the child has. It should be helpful to expand on those features to include actions, feelings, and experiences of the child. In what follows, then, each resilience feature is expanded with corresponding statements of actions, feelings, and experiences of the child.

I HAVE

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what

My parents and other caregivers show me love by holding me, kissing me, rocking me, and telling me how much they love me. They are happy when I am happy and comfort me when I am sad. I can trust them because they are there when I need them and they do not do mean or painful things to me or let anyone else harm me.

People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble

My parents or other caregivers have set times when I eat, get bathed, go to bed, take a nap. The routine is changed only when necessary or for variety. I know what I must not touch, that I cannot hit or bite anyone, and that I must obey the rules and follow the routines. I know the consequences of disobedience but I am not harmed or belittled as discipline. Instead, I am usually deprived of something I like or want to do. Being by myself for a little while seems to work, so I can calm down and maybe think about what I have done. My parents help me understand what I did wrong and forgive me, and we are happy again.

People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things

My parents and other caregivers show me how to do things around the home. I might help make meals or set the table. They also show me how to behave with company, including what I cannot do in front of others that I can do with my family or when I am alone. They show me how to recognize feelings and how to express some of them. They show me that they are fair and honest with others and believe in doing the right thing. They may take me to a place of worship.

People who want me to learn to do things on my own

My parents teach me how to eat, wash my hands, put on my clothes. They praise me when I do these things on my own. They expect me to ask for things I need and to take care of what I have. They encourage me to explore places at home or around me and urge me to keep trying when I am a bit afraid or hesitant. My parents help me learn how to calm myself when I get too excited or frustrated.

People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

My parents take me to the doctor or clinic or someone who knows about health when I am sick or need a shot. They let me go to a preschool or day care program if they want and if one is available. They can get help from social services or from a knowledgeable person if I have a problem. And they know that I am safe because police or others are around to protect our family.

I AM

A person people can like and love

My parents and others tell me they love me and smile when I come into the room. I am happy most of the time and can jump around, dance, and laugh. I like to play and have fun. I sometimes like to snuggle, be held, and hug people. I do not stay mad or sad for long.

Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern

I give a toy to my mother or a friend when they are sad. I cry when my sister cries and try to comfort her by sharing something with her. I tell my parents I love them and I bring things to them when they ask. I like to help people so they know I care about them.

Respectful of myself and others

I am sure I can feed and dress myself. I know I can build a house or a road with playthings and am proud of what I achieve. I do not try to hurt myself and I do not want other people to do unkind things to me. I respect other people and their feelings and do not want to do anything unkind to them. I like myself and can make friends with other children.

Willing to be responsible for what I do

I do as many things as I can by myself and know what is expected of me. I try to do things in the way I have been taught. I feel good when I do things on my own and in the right way and sad when I do things wrong or am naughty. I know that what I do helps in how things come out and that I am responsible for what I do.

Sure things will be all right

I believe that things will work out and will be all right. I look forward to tomorrow. I am learning what is good and bad and what I should and should not do. I have those around me I can trust.

I CAN

Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me

I can show somebody what I want or use words to ask for it. I can often tell someone how I feel. I am learning to listen to what someone else is saying, to be aware of how he or she is feeling, and to respond so we understand each other and do not hurt each other's feelings.

Find ways to solve problems that I face

I can sometimes figure out what a problem is in dressing, making something, or other things I do. I can often stay with a problem until it is solved, and may even know when I need help and ask for it. I am learning to ask for help when I am having trouble with a friend who will not take turns or share.

Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous

I am beginning to put words to some of my feelings and know when I have certain feelings. I am beginning to be able to calm myself. I try not to do things that are dangerous to me or to others and

I try to think about what will happen if I take certain actions. I am learning a little about cause and effect.

Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

I am learning about which parent acts very quickly or thinks things over for quite some time. I am beginning to know who will go into action, take chances, and try new things and who will be cautious, careful, and consider all angles. I am learning about myself and my temperament. I need help with this.

Find someone to help me when I need it

I know that my caregivers can be trusted and I am learning that I can trust others, too. These are people I can turn to when I need help, am unhappy, or need to talk. I am willing to ask them for the help and am willing to seek them out.

These are the resilience features of three year old children. But they have had many experiences and a great deal of help from those around them to acquire and develop these resilience features during the first three years of life. No child will have all of these features at age 3, but parents and other caregivers can promote resilience by drawing on these features as guides to what they do.

Some examples of experiences they might have had and responses that would promote resilience or would prevent resilience from developing, should help put these features into a dynamic and functional perspective.

2. *Examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting actions*

Here is the situation: The baby is in the crib and is lying on his back screaming and kicking. You do not know what is wrong. He just keeps screaming and kicking.

You promote resilience if you pick him up and begin to soothe him while finding out if he is wet, too cold or too hot, needs patting on his back to remove air, or mainly needs comforting (I HAVE). You help him calm down if he feels loved and cared for (I AM), and he can begin to calm himself down (I CAN).

You do not promote resilience if you look at him, decide to change his diaper, and then tell him to stop crying. If he does not stop crying, you walk away and let him 'cry it out.' This interaction does not promote resilience as the baby needs more than a change of diapers. He needs to be held and comforted so that he knows he is loved and cared for. Then he can begin to calm down.

Here is another situation: The 2 year old toddler is at the store with you. She sees some candy, grabs it and starts to eat it. When you try to take it away from her, she shouts, "No! Mine! Mine!"

You promote resilience if you remove her from the situation so you do not disturb others, explain calmly to her that she cannot take things without your permission, and give her something else or show her something else to distract her. You help her understand limits of behavior (I HAVE), help her feel responsible for her own behavior (I AM), and communicate with her as she listens (I CAN).

You do not promote resilience if you just let her eat the candy or if you hit her and scold her or if you force her hand open to take it. This kind of interaction makes her afraid of the one who provides love and trust, makes her rigid in her behavior and makes her feel unloved and not understood.

3a. *What parents and other caregivers can do to promote resilience*

- During the first three years of life, parents and other caregivers can do many things to promote resilience in their little ones so that there is a great likelihood of a three year old achieving some of the resilience features described. Those features are certainly worthy goals. Here is what parents and other caregivers can do:

- Provide unconditional love and express love both physically and verbally by holding, rocking, stroking, and using soothing words of comfort, and encourage the child to calm down.

- Enforce rules for children two and three and use removal of privileges, and other forms of discipline that do not belittle, harm or reject the child.

- Model behavior that communicates confidence, optimism, and good results for children two and three years old.

- Praise the two and three year old child for accomplishments such as toilet training, calming self, talking, or making something

- Encourage the two or three year old child to try things and to do things on his or her own with minimal adult help.

- When language is developing, acknowledge and label the child's feelings. Encourage the child to recognize and express his or her own feelings and to recognize some feelings in others; for example, sad, glad, sorry, happy, mad.

- Prepare the child about three years old for unpleasant or adverse situations - gradually, if possible - by talking about them, reading books, play acting, etc.

- When language is developing, use it to reinforce features of resilience to help the child face adversity; for example, "I know you can do it," encourages autonomy and reinforces a child's faith in his or her own problem-solving skills; "I'm here," comforts and reminds the child of the trusting relationships that can be relied on.

- Are aware of their own and the child's temperament so that they can gauge how quickly or slowly to introduce changes; how much pushing, encouragement, etc., to give, and how much patience they all have.

3b. *The dynamics of promoting resilience*

It is important to promote resilience by using the dynamics of the resilience features rather than just promoting one feature at a time. This is done as follows:

- Balance the freedom to explore with safe supports.
- Offer explanations and reconciliation along with rules and discipline - when language is developing.
- Give the child comfort and encouragement in stressful situations.
- Provide a stable environment for the very young child, but some novelty for the two and three year old - new experiences, people, places and changes in routine.
- Change and modify the mix of freedom and safety, explanations and discipline, help and autonomy, etc., for the two and three year old child as the child's reactions suggest.

*Portrait of a resilient three year old*

A resilient three year old feels secure in the parents' love and believes that his or her needs will be met. The child feels free to explore, to try new things, but knows that there are rules and that breaking them has clear consequences. The child feels comfortable with daily routines and delights in learning how to do things independently. The child feels lovable and proud of his or her accomplishments. The child can express caring for others through feelings and actions. The child is learning to use words to express feelings and is also learning to manage his or her own behavior and impulses. The child is learning to solve problems, and to understand how he or she tends to react to situations. These things are hard to acquire, but the child can turn to trusted adults for help. Not all resilient three year olds will have developed all their I HAVE, I AM, I CAN resilience features to the same degree, but they can be on their way.

EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Much can be learned from people in other countries and cultures because resilience is a universal capacity. Parents and other caregivers from countries as far removed as Thailand and Russia; Finland and South Africa; Chile and Canada, all respond to the same presented situations with very similar actions. Some responses promote resilience and some do not. No country has an outstanding record of resilience and no country actively destroys or ignores the need for responses to situations that require resilience features. Again, the problem seems to be the lack of knowledge about

resilience and how to promote it. The examples provided here came from international research conducted by the author and should be of interest to you.

Situation: Joella, 10 months old, is crawling on the floor and finds a dirty rag. She picks it up and begins to bite it and suck it. The caregiver sees this and knows the rag is very dirty and may cause an infection in the child.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a." The parent would replace the rag with a piece of clean cloth and tell the baby that the rag was dirty. The baby would allow her mother to replace the rag with a clean cloth and would be satisfied that she had something to replace the rag."

In this response, the mother does not upset the baby. Instead, she exchanges the dirty rag with a clean one and talks to the baby in a calm way so the baby trusts (I HAVE) her mother and is calmed. The baby can go on with her play and continue exploring her environment (I CAN) with confidence (I AM).

b. "The caregiver took the rag away and was upset. The baby cried and will be sad because she wants the rag. The mother will give the baby a clean rag and then hug her."

In this response, the caregiver took the rag away and was upset. The baby responded with crying and sadness. At this point, the caregiver changed the way to deal with the situation, getting a clean rag and hugging the baby (I HAVE). This would let the baby calm herself (I CAN) and feel lovable (I AM) as she continues her play.

Resilience can be promoted in children in more than one way and behaviors can be changed any time if there is danger of preventing the promotion of resilience.

*Responses that do not promote resilience.*

a. "The parent ran to the child and told her that the rag was dirty and took the rag out of her mouth. The parent felt frightened. The child allowed her mother to take the rag and showed no feelings. She does not put the rag in her mouth any more."

In this response the parent is responding to her own fear of infection in the child and is not aware that the child is passive and gives up.

b. "I don't know. She would pick up the baby and will feel nothing. The baby will go to sleep."

In this response both the parent and the baby are passive; nothing is learned and nothing is communicated.

Here is another situation many parents from around the world responded to. Some of the responses promote resilience and some do not or, indeed, prevent it from developing.

Jason is two-and-one-half years old. He is supposed to be eating what very little food there is for him. It is important for him to eat if he is going to survive and grow. He will not eat and when urged to he throws himself on the floor and screams and kicks in a real temper tantrum.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a. "The mother took the child in her arms and calmed him. Then she explained why and what the child had to eat. She had the same food for herself and for the child so they could eat together. The child thought that if his mother had the same meal then he should not refuse to eat. He was happy she did not force him or place too much emphasis on eating. He didn't have to be upset or worry about eating. They enjoyed their meal together."

In this response, the mother showed her love and caring (I HAVE) and began communicating with the child (I CAN). The boy did not feel afraid or naughty but felt happy about being lovable and responsible for his own behavior (I AM).

b. "The mother took the child to the doctor for a checkup and was happy that nothing was wrong with the child. The child ate the food because he does not want to be taken to the doctor! He will eat and grow."

In this response, the mother used health services to check for any problems (I HAVE). The child realizes that what he does or does not do has consequences (I AM), and knows how to prevent any other unwelcome visit (I CAN)!

Resilience can be promoted in more than one way and behaviors can be changed if there is danger of preventing the promotion of resilience.

*Responses that do not promote resilience*

a. "The parent is mad and quarrels with the child. She prepares a dish to look nice but the child refuses to eat. She teases the child and then the child really does not eat. He feels his mother is annoying. The parent punished the child but he still doesn't eat and the mother will get tired and give up."

In this response the parent is responding mainly to her own anger. She tries to force the child to do something he does not want to do and shows no understanding of why he may not want to eat. Her giving up is more in frustration than any insight to her child.

b. "The parent argued with him, gave him a good spanking, and told him to eat his food. The parent felt helpless and hurt because the child had to be punished for the tantrum. The child became frightened and started to cry. He felt hurt and not loved. The child will have respect and become obedient and not throw a tantrum."

In this response the parent is punitive, even though she realizes the child suffers from this. It seems the parent does not know what to do but sees the situation as a threat to her control and therefore must punish to reestablish control. The child learns only to fear punishment t and not to expect any understanding.

USING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

You probably have been thinking about your own experiences in promoting resilience in the children you have or work with. It may be helpful to you to begin thinking about those experiences in a structured way. You may want to use this form of thinking:

Can you remember a situation you experienced with an infant or toddler that had the potential for promoting resilience in the baby or prevent its promotion? (Put your responses in the left hand column of a sheet of paper.)

What was the situation?

What did you do?

How did you feel?

What did the child do when you took that action?

How did the child feel?

What was the outcome or how did it end?

After you have done this, look at the ways parents and caregivers can promote resilience in infants and toddlers and see if you would change your behavior in any way. Did you provide the I HAVE features and help the child with the I AM and I CAN features of resilience? What dynamics did you use? What would you change if the situation occurred again? (Put your responses in the right hand column.)

You may also want to keep some kind of record of experiences you have that you perceive as adversities, and indicate what you did in response or in preparation that promoted resilience in the child.

## CHILDREN FROM FOUR THROUGH SEVEN

Framework for their development

Children during the fourth through the seventh years of life are learning about initiative. They are busy, busy, busy -- feeding a doll, climbing trees, building wood-block skyscrapers or make-believe schools. They are involved in all kinds of play and pretend activities and often have difficulty separating fantasy from reality, lies from truth. The children start many projects but do not necessarily complete them. The tasks of family members and friends often seem as interesting as their own, and they want to help, and may seem to invade the activities of others.

These very busy children are beginning to understand the world of symbols and ask endless questions. If their questions are dismissed, or if they are unable to take the initiative to accomplish things or are rejected by those they seek to help, they may feel guilty, unworthy, or naughty.

This, then, is the framework within which children can learn to become resilient. These are also the limits that parents and other caregivers must work within as they promote resilience in their young children these years. It may be helpful to: 1. describe the resilience features of Seven Year Olds; 2. present examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting action; 3. provide suggestions of what caregivers can do to promote resilience in these children; and 4. provide a portrait of a resilient seven year old.

1. R*esilience Features of Seven Year Olds*

The I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN resilience features presented at the beginning of the Guide are primarily statements and do not present the resilience features in actions, feelings, and experiences the child has. It should be helpful to expand on those features to include actions, feelings, and experiences of the child. In what follows, then, each resilience feature is expanded with corresponding statements of actions, feelings, and experiences of the child.

I HAVE

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what

My parents and other caregivers show me love and accept me without reservations. They pat me, hug me, and tell me how much they love me. It is nice to be loved and I need that. I can trust my parents to love me even when I am naughty or sulking, and they try to comfort me and calm me down when I am hurt or unhappy. They do not do mean or painful things to me or allow anyone else to harm me. My parents are there when I need them and that is important to know.

People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble

The rules and routines are clear and I know what is expected of me. When rules are changed, I am told so I am not surprised or confused. It is comforting to know what to expect. I know what I am supposed to do when I start some activity or game: I must clean up after myself, not bother others, and not do any damage. When I break the rules, I know what the consequences are. My parents talk to me and tell me exactly what I did wrong. But they also listen to what I have to say, and we can usually work something out. Even when I am punished, my parents explain the punishment, carry it out, and then we reconcile. I need my parents to love me, to accept me and to forgive me.

People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things

I watch what my parents do when they are making something, repairing something, or talking with people. I especially watch how they treat people and deal with conflicts or problems with others. It is important to me to see my parents show by their actions what is right and good. They are showing me how to be a good human being and I am learning. My parents help me and tell me where and when certain behaviors are acceptable and where and when they are not.

People who want me to learn to do things on my own

My parents want me to accept more responsibility for what I do, and they encourage me. But I am so eager to do things on my own that I sometimes have to be cautioned and slowed down. I am learning to think before I act so that I do not make so many mistakes. And I am also learning when to ask for help. I need my parents or someone to encourage me to go ahead when I feel unsure of myself. My parents use some words of resilience so I can learn more about what makes me able to overcome bad or scaring situations.

People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

My parents take me to the doctor or clinic or someone who knows about health when I am sick or need any shots. They let me go to school or day care, if there is one, or have some group experience with other children. They can get help from social services or people who know what to do, when we need it. I feel safe because my parents show me the people who protect us.

I AM

A person people can like and love

I smile at people, play with them, maybe sing a song or dance for them. I like to do things to please people because then they are happy and so am I. I show my love by hugging the people I love and telling them I love them. I do not behave too actively or impulsively. Nor am I so quiet no one knows I am there. I can keep on a pretty even keel and can calm myself or stir myself up when I need to.

Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern

I am becoming more and more aware of how other people feel and I can even give names to what they seem to be feeling. I care about what has happened to them and want to help them. I show my love and caring by what I say and do, and I am able to feel some of the pain they are feeling when they are sad or troubled.

Respectful of myself and others

I like myself most of the time and want to be proud of what I do and achieve. I can do many things and am learning to do more things. I feel sure I can be accepted by other people and children because I am a good person who cares about others as well as myself. I do not let anyone make fun of me, hurt me, or tease me. I respect myself and expect others to respect me.

Willing to be responsible for what I do

I am doing more and more things on my own but know when I must tell someone or ask permission. I am aware that what I do affects how things turn out and know that I must take the consequences of what I do. I may not always be able to admit I was wrong, but I am learning not to blame someone else when what I have done caused the problem.

Sure things will be all right

I believe that I will be able to be safe, loved and accepted, and that the future is promising. I have confidence that I can be a good person and that there are many others I can trust. I hope that whatever is wrong now will become better.

I CAN

Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me

I can talk to my parents and others and share my thoughts and feelings with them. We can try to resolve any conflicts and can be clear on what we need from each other and what we can expect from one another.

Find ways to solve problems that I face

I am able to assess a problem and understand the parts of it. Then, I can think of a strategy to solve the problem. I may need help with this and know how to ask for it. I can solve problems I am having with friends. We can talk things through and agree on a solution so that we both are satisfied.

Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous

I know more about what upsets me or makes me angry, afraid, or unhappy. I am learning more about how to manage my reactions to these feelings by trying to calm down. If I do not react too strongly or withdraw too much I can think more clearly and be in charge of what I do in response to my feelings. Talking to the person who has upset me helps me get over the problem between us.

Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

I know when I tend to take action before thinking and am learning how to reverse that order. I am learning about how cautiously or quickly to go into action with what I do or say. And I am also learning about how cautiously or quickly those around me go into action. This is useful information to help me know when it is a good time to do things with those around me.

Find someone to help me when I need it

I have found a teacher or a neighbor or a relative or another child I can trust with my feelings and thoughts and problems. I can turn to them when I need comfort or help and I know they will respond. My parents still are my first choice, though.

These are the resilience features of seven year old children. But they have had many experiences and a great deal of help from those round them to acquire and develop these resilience features during these years. No child will have all of these features at age 7, but parents, teachers and children themselves can promote resilience by drawing on these features as guides to what they do.

Some examples of experiences they might have had and responses that would promote resilience or would prevent resilience from developing, should help put these features into a dynamic and functional perspective.

2. *Examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting actions*

Here is the situation: The mother had to go to another city to find a job and could not bring her 4 year old daughter because there was no one to care for her while the mother worked. And she could not afford daycare costs

You promote resilience if you explain to your daughter that you are going to go to find a job so you can have money to rent a nice place for both them. You tell her how much you love her and that she will stay with our sister until you find a place for them to live (I HAVE). You let her protest and assure her you love her (I AM) and will send her post cards with pretty pictures. You assure her everything will be fine and you together again, soon. You let her as ask questions and express feelings (I CAN), but help her understand this is a necessary move.

You do not promote resilience if you tell her you are leaving and scold her for being upset. Or if you do not explain why you have to go, how long it will be before she can join you and what

arrangements you have made for her, including how you will keep in touch with her. Without explanations and the opportunity to express her feelings about your leaving, she will feel you are abandoning her and do not love her. She will feel unlovable and that she has done something wrong. She will feel helpless and sad.

Here is another situation: A 7 year old boy is in the yard with his dad. The dad and a neighbor got into an argument that escalated into a fight. The neighbor pulled out a knife and stabbed his dad. He saw it happen.

Resilience will be promoted in the boy if he thinks of something he can do to help his father (I CAN), if he tries to help his father and shows him he loves him by saying comforting words to him (I AM). He will also promote his own resilience if he knows there are people at home or at a neighbors he can get to help him so his father can get medical attention (I HAVE). People who do help him can add to the promotion of resilience in the boy by praising him for what he has done to help his dad, to comfort him, and to make sure the father receives the medical attention he needs.

Resilience is not promoted if the boy simply collapses into tears or runs away taking no action, if he is too afraid to seek help for fear he will be stabbed, too, or if someone scolds him for not getting help or even for not doing something to prevent the stabbing. He might even be asked if he was the cause of the argument in the first place.

3a. *What parents, teachers and other caregivers can do to promote resilience*

During the years 4 through 7, parents, teachers and other caregivers can do many things to promote resilience in these children so that there is a great likelihood of a seven year old achieving some of the resilience features described. These features are certainly worthy goals. Here is what parents and other caregivers can do:

- Provide unconditional love and express love verbally and with actions
- Use holding, rocking, and a soothing voice to calm a child and encourage the child to use such techniques as taking a deep breath or counting to ten to become calm before talking about problems or unacceptable behaviors
- Model resilience behaviors when facing such challenges as interpersonal problems or conflict and adversity; demonstrate appropriate behavior in different situations; and model courage, confidence, optimism, and self-esteem
- Enforce rules and use removal of privileges, and other forms of discipline that set limits to behavior and some consequences, without crushing the child's spirit

- Praise the child for accomplishments, such as finishing a puzzle or reading a book and for desired behaviors, such as putting away the toys or expressing his or her anger without throwing a tantrum

- Encourage the child to take independent action with minimum adult help

- Continue to help the child learn to recognize and label his or her own feelings as well as those of others

- Continue to help the child become increasingly aware of his or her own temperament (e.g.,, how shy or outgoing, cautious or thrill-seeking he or she is) as well as of the temperaments of the adults in the child's life

- Gradually expose the child to adversities or prepare the child for them by talking, reading books, and identifying and discussing resilience features that may be helpful

- Encourage the child to demonstrate empathy and caring, to be pleasant and do nice things for other

- Encourage the child to use communication and problem solving skills to resolve interpersonal problems or to seek help with them

- Communicate with the child, discussing, sharing, and reporting on the days events, ideas, observations, and feelings

- Help the child begin to accept responsibility for his or her own behavior and to understand that his or her actions have consequences

3b. *The dynamics of promoting resilience*

It is important to promote resilience by using the dynamics of the resilience features rather than just promoting one feature at a time. This is done as follows:

- Balance providing help with encouraging independence

- Offer explanations and reconciliation along with rules and discipline

- Accept errors and failures while providing guidance toward improvement

- Give the child comfort and encouragement in stressful situations

- Encourage and model flexibility in selecting different resilience features as an adverse situation changes; e.g., seek help instead of continuing alone in a very difficult situation; show empathy instead of continuing with anger or fear; share feelings with a friend instead of continuing to suffer alone

4. *Portrait of a resilient seven your old*

A resilient seven year old is proud of his or her accomplishments and is increasingly able to initiate activities and solve problems independently. The child feels pride and confidence in overcoming an adverse situation. He or she is beginning to understand the connection between actions and consequences and is getting better at taking responsibility for his or her own behavior. However, the child still may justify his or her actions while recognizing 'bad behavior' in others.

The child's ever-improving language skills, combined with good modeling on the part of the caregivers, enable him or her to communicate with increasing effectiveness. The child feels secure in the love of others, good about himself or herself, and proud to be able to use the growing industry to please oneself and others. Not all resilient seven year olds will have developed all their I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN resilience features to the same degree, but they will all be on their way.

EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Much can be learned from people in other countries and cultures because resilience is a universal capacity. Parents and other caregivers from countries as far removed as Thailand and Russia; Finland and South Africa; Chile and Canada, all respond to the same presented situations with very similar actions. Some responses promote resilience and some do not. No country has an outstanding record of resilience and no country actively destroys or ignores the need for responses to situations that require resilience features. Again, the problem seems to be the lack of knowledge about resilience and how to promote it. The examples provided here came from international research conducted by the author and should be of interest to you.

Situation: Sarah is four years old. She is playing with her older brother and they are pretending they have a shop. They want to sell food and juice and so have arranged some boxes to put the food on and are looking for bottles or vessels to put the juice in. They take food from the family food area to put on the boxes and are filling bottles with juice. Their father sees them and realizes they are taking precious food and juice that the family needs.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a. "The parent tried to explain to the children that the food was needed for the family. He offered non-food items so they could go on playing the game. The father felt vexed and sad, but felt satisfied when the children understood and followed his request. The children acted up a bit but did what the parent asked, even though the wish to take what is forbidden remained!"

In this response the father shows love and respect for the children and wants them to be able to continue with their game (I HAVE). The children realize they can exercise their sense of doing things on their own while assuming responsibility for their behavior (I AM) and there is good communication and problem solving with the father (I CAN).

b. "The father asked the children to use imaginary things instead of real food. He felt irritated. The children started to use their imaginations, using water instead of juice and toys instead of food. The children were a little bit uncomfortable, but they will be able to turn water into wine next time!"

In this response the father suggested an alternative solution (I HAVE), even though he was upset by their behavior. The children became increasingly self reliant and confident (I AM) and they use a great deal of imagination and creativity in their game (I CAN).

Resilience can be promoted in children in more than one way and behaviors can be changed any time if there is danger of preventing the promotion of resilience.

*Responses to that do not promote resilience*

a. "The parent took the food away and gave the children some candy. The parent did this because he did not want a commotion. They asked the parent to let them play with the food and that they would put it away later, but were not allowed to. They did not feel anything except some coolness in the relationship with the parent."

This response confuses the children. The parent substitutes the game with candy to quiet them and no explanation is given for refusing to let them continue, even when they promised to put the food away later. The children are left with a sense of a strained, unclear relationship with the parent.

Here is another situation involving a child with responses that promote resilience and responses that do not promote resilience or, indeed, crush it.

Situation: Raul is six years old. He had an accident when he was three and his legs will not hold his weight any longer. His arms and hands are all right and he uses them all the time. He is building a fence around a piece of wood that he is pretending is the house and is using small stick t o build with. He has increasing trouble reaching around for the small sticks, and his useless legs keep knocking down parts of the fence. He becomes so frustrated that he begins to throw the small sticks around the room and starts to cry.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a. "The parent calmed the child and helped him find a place that was comfortable to build his road with the things he needed and liked. The parent felt sympathy and a desire to help the child. The

child calmed down and worked with his parent. He felt sad and some self-pity, but will calm down and manage with less outside help."

In this response the parents calms the child and helps him find a better place to go on with his play (I HAVE). The child calms himself and continues his play (I AM) and he is able to work with his parent in solving the problem (I CAN).

b. "The parent would soothe the child and help him build. The parent would feel sad for the child. The child will work with the parent and fix what he is building, but he would feel sad. Then he would see how nice it is to work with the parent."

In this response the parent comforted the child and began working with him (I HAVE). The child could become more confident and trusting in his own capacities (I AM), and saw the pleasure of working with someone and not just alone (I CAN).

Resilience can be promoted in children in more than one way and behaviors can be changed any time if there is danger of preventing the promotion of resilience.

*Responses to that do not promote resilience*

a. "The parent lets the child cry and be mad. The parent felt sad but thinks it is good for the child to face his problems and learn to solve them by himself. The child might feel helpless or angry but must learn how to live by himself. He felt angry, sad, and hopeless. The parent would grasp the child's true feelings and communicate with him."

In this response, the parent saw the situation as requiring the child to face it himself. She felt he needed to learn to solve problems without help and tolerate his negative feelings. And when she grasped his suffering she did talk to him, but there was no clear support or help for him. He, indeed, was alone in his misery.

b. "The parent scolds the child for throwing the sticks and takes them away from him. She gives him some old pans to play with."

In this response the parent felt the need to punish the child without any explanations or understanding. The child is left confused by the punishment and then having the pans to play with. There is no communication or clarification of what is unacceptable behavior and why. Nor is he helped to be successful.

USING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

You probably have been thinking about your own experiences in promoting resilience in the children you have or work with. It may be helpful to you to begin thinking about those experiences in a structure way. You may want to use this form of thinking:

Can you remember a situation you experiences with a child 4 to 7 that had the potential for promoting resilience in the child or prevent its promotion. (Put you responses in the left hand column of a sheet of paper.)

What was the situation?

What did you do?

How did you feel?

What did the child do when you took that action?

How did the child feel?

What was the outcome or how did it end?

After you have done this, look at the ways parents and caregivers can promote resilience in children from 4 to 7 and see if you change your behavior in any way. Did you provide the I HAVE features and help the child with the I AM and I CAN features of resilience? What dynamics did you use? What would you change id the situation occurred again? (Put your responses in the right hand column.)

## THE CHILD FROM EIGHT THROUGH ELEVEN

Framework for their development

Children from 7 through 11 are learning about industry. They are actively engaged in mastering life skills, particularly in schoolwork. They want to be successful and to have a positive self-image as achievers. They also want close friends, as well as peer acceptance and approval. They can complete tasks and do things with others.

If they are not able to be successful in all this industry, they feel inferior and become extremely sensitive to their limitations. If the parents, teachers, or friends make fun of them or otherwise communicate that they are not very able, they will feel insecure and may begin to doubt their self-worth and ability to succeed in the world.

This, then, is the framework within which children 7 through 11 can learn to become resilient. These are also the limits that parents and other caregivers must work within as they promote resilience in their children. It may be helpful to: 1. describe the resilience features of Eleven Year Olds; 2. present examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting actions; 3. provide suggestions of what caregivers can do to promote resilience in these children; and 4. describe what a resilient eleven year old might look like.

1. *Resilience Features of Eleven Year Olds*

The I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN resilience features presented at the beginning of the Guide are primarily statements and do not present the resilience features in actions, feelings, and experiences the child has. It should be helpful to expand on those features to include actions, feelings, and experience of the child. In what follows, then, each resilience feature is expanded with corresponding statements of actions, feelings, and experiences of the child.

I HAVE

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what

My parents still give me unconditional love, and I can rely on it being there. They often tell me how much they love me and how proud they are to have me as their child. I trust my parents to love me even when I do something wrong or am in a bad mood. They try to comfort me and help me feel better. We ar e able to talk about what may be bothering me. I also have trusting relationships with other people --a teacher, another adult, or a classmate. It is nice to have so many people I can trust and love.

People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble

I do not need as much routine at home as I used to, and my parents allow me to come in a little bit later than before. They give me a time by which I must be home, though. I can count on the family to keep some routines and I respect them. I am expected to contribute to keeping the home clean and making sure I do not leave dirty things around. I may have to take care of a sister or a brother, do chores, and help when asked. I know the consequences when I break the rules and am sometimes punished. But I am not harmed physically. We are able to talk about what I did wrong and I can give my side of why I did what I did. Sometimes we negotiate a punishment. My parents or other family members and I make up and are reconciled again. I need to have everything all right again.

People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things

I still see my parents as showing me how to behave in different situations by what they do. But I am more critical and sometimes think they are not being fair. I can ask them why they did what they did and talk about it, but I am careful not to be critical; that is still their right, but not mine! I have teachers and heroes as role models, and I watch what they do and say. Sometimes I think they are not doing the right thing and I decide I will not do the same thing.

People who want me to learn to do things on my own

My parents expect me to make more decisions on my own and to seek help or advice as I need it. They give me opportunities to deal with problems alone but are there to help me when I need it. They encourage me and say things that help me become a more capable person.

People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

Our family can go to a doctor or a clinic or to someone who knows about health, and receive care. I am in school or someplace where I am learning many things and feel I am doing well. I like the people who teach me things and I have lots of friends. Our family can get help from a social or welfare service or from someone who knows what to do when we have special problems, and our community has police officers or those who protect us to make sure we are safe.

I AM

A person people can like and love

I know people like me. I make friends easily or just focus on a few friends who like me. I try to do nice things to make people like me -- share some food, give a gift, let people know how glad I am to see them, help them with something. I also try to manage my actions so I do not act too fast or too slow and annoy people. I can calm myself down, too. I know when I am successful because people like me more.

Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern

I am sensitive to when someone is unhappy or upset and I try to show that I am concerned. I may ask them what happened or I may just try to get them out of their mood by some suggestion of what we might do together. If I am able, I may make a joke to lighten their mood. I want to do something for someone who is unhappy and I think of ways I can be helpful or make them happier. This can be called empathy and altruism.

Respectful of myself and others

I respect myself and expect others to respect me. I am proud of who I am and what I achieve, and will not do things that make me ashamed of myself. But if I do something wrong, I try to correct it so I feel good about myself again. I respect others and show this by listening, being polite, taking turns and saying good things about them.

Willing to be responsible for what I do

I know that I can do more and more things on my own but that my responsibilities increase, too. What I do affects what others do and the outcome of events. I cannot blame others when it is my fault that things went wrong. I am also learning how to separate what I did to affect outcomes and what others did. This helps me know where the responsibility lies. I try to correct what I did wrong or apologize.

Sure things will be all right

I have confidence that things will turn out all right and that the future looks good. I accept my responsibility in making the future good. Even when I make mistakes, I have faith that things can be corrected and things will be all right. I know more and more about what is right and what is wrong, but I am also aware that people do not always agree about what is right and what is wrong.

I CAN

Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me

My parents and I can talk about my growing independence, my future, what is expected of me, my needs, and what they want from me. We can discuss our different points of view and negotiate solutions to problems. I can communicate with my friends and share my thoughts and feelings with them, too.

Find ways to solve problems that I face

I am often able to see all sides of a problem and understand what it is about. This is true for solving school work problems and for resolving interpersonal problems. I can ask a teacher for help when I do not understand a school work problem, but I talk with my friends or whoever is involved when

I have a problems with another person. I can test out solutions with thoughts and words before I go into action.

Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous

I am able to recognize my feelings and give them names. I can usually recognize and name feelings in others, too. Then, I try to find out what has made me feel like this or has made the other person feel the way he or she does. This helps me when I want to express my thoughts and feelings and listen to the other person tell about his or her thoughts and feelings. I can show the person I care about his or her side of the conflict and we can begin to resolve it. I try to manage any tendency to react too soon or too strongly and to calm myself down and think before acting impulsively.

Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

I know myself pretty well, especially how I react to things and events around me. I happen to be someone who gets easily excited and eager for action. Some of my friends are than way, too. When we're together, I have to be careful not to get carried away and do something unwise. One of my parents is a lot like me, but the other one is very careful and cautious and sometimes seems afraid to do anything. My friends may be more like me or more like my cautious parent. It helps to know what to expect from others, both adults and friends.

Find someone to help me when I need it

I can find someone I trust to help me in some things and another person to help me in others. I am learning more and more to seek out those people when I am troubled, do not understand what is happening, or need to share my hopes and dreams. I can go to my parents, but I have others whom I also can trust to help me.

These are the resilience features of eleven year old children. But they have had many experiences and a great deal of help from those around them to acquire and develop these resilience features. And they are increasingly able to promote their own resilience. No child will have all of these features at age 11, but parents, teachers and children themselves can promote resilience by drawing on these features as guides to what they do.

Some examples of experiences they might have had and responses that would promote resilience or would prevent resilience from developing, should help put these features into a dynamic and functional perspective.

2. *Examples of resilience and non-resilience promoting actions*

Here is the situation: An eleven year old girl was taking care of her three year old brother when the house caught fire. She tried to put it out, but couldn't. Then she tried to reach her brother, but couldn't. Finally, she ran out of the house and her brother was burned to death.

You promote resilience if you share the grief of the entire family over the loss of the three year old, and assure the girl you love her (I HAVE); if you let the girl know you understand how much she tried to save her brother (I CAN); and if you help her sort out her feelings of responsibility from her actions and desire to save her brother (I AM). You will help the girl use resilience to overcome this tragic adversity. The experience may guide her into a life of helping others in trouble and thereby become transformed by the tragedy.

If you blame the girl for not putting out the fire and for not saving her brother, you will reduce her to guilt and shame and sadness that may prevent her from developing or ever developing resilience to overcome future adversities in life.

Here is another situation: A nine year old boy went out of the house even after the father told him not to go out. The father did not know about this until he realized it was late and the boy was not home.

You will promote resilience if you talk to him when he returns and ask why he broke the rules (I HAVE); if you make clear that his behavior is not acceptable even with his excuses, and that he is responsible for what he did (I AM); and if you talk with him about what needs to be done to prevent this kind of behavior in the future ( I CAN). He will learn from this experience to use resilience to face this adversity, to learn from it, and to behave in a more responsible way in the future.

You do not promote resilience if you yell at him or spank him when he comes home, and accuse him of being a bad boy. Then you make him feel guilty, but resentful, and you have given him a label of 'bad boy,' which will influence his idea of himself in the future. He will have difficulty dealing with a future adverse situation , even one that he creates, because he lacks resilience and none is being promoted.

3a. *What parents, teachers, other adults and children themselves can do to promote resilience*

During the years 8 through 11, parents, teacher other adults and children themselves can do many things to promote resilience in their children these years, so that there is a great likelihood of an eleven year old achieving some of the resilience features described. Those features are certainly worthy goals. Here is what parents, other adults and children themselves can do:

- Provide unconditional love
- Express love verbally and physically in age-appropriate ways
- Use limits, calming behaviors, and oral reminders to help the children manage and modulate feelings, especially negative ones and impulsive responses
- Model consistent behaviors that communicate values and rules, including helpful resilience features
- Clarify the basis for rules and expectations
- Praise accomplishments and desired behaviors, such as sticking with and finishing a hard homework assignment
- Provide opportunities for the children to practice dealing with problems and adversities through exposure to manageable adversities or to imagined adversities. Provide guidance in the process, drawing on appropriate resilience features
- Encourage communication so that issues, expectations, feelings, and problems can be discussed and shared

*The dynamics of promoting resilience*

It is important to promote resilience by using the dynamics of the resilience features rather than just promoting one at a time. This is done as follows:

- Balance autonomy with available, but not imposed, help
- Modulate consequences for mistakes with love and empathy so that the child can fail without feeling too much stress or fear of loss of approval and love
- Communicate about and negotiate some limits to growing independence; discuss new expectations and new challenges
- Encourage the child to accept responsibility for the consequences of his or her behavior while communicating confidence and optimism about the hoped for and desired outcomes
- Encourage and model flexibility in selecting different resilience factors as an adverse situation changes; e.g., seek help instead of continuing alone in a very difficult situation; show empathy

instead of continuing with anger or fear; share feelings with a friend instead of continuing to suffer alone

4. *Portrait of a resilient eleven year old*

The resilient eleven year old is becoming flexible enough to move back and forth between autonomy and appropriate dependence, seeking help from authority figures and peers. The child is confident in himself or herself as a 'doer,' able to take on and complete many activities, solving problems as they arise. The child's social confidence is also high. He or she can seek, develop, and maintain friendships and is increasingly able to talk through problems that arise in these relationships and to find reconciliation. The child is increasingly able to assess his or her own behavior and to accept responsibility for his or her actions and their consequences.

At eleven, the child can share feelings with trusted others and recognize and respect what others are feeling. The child is broadening the base of values and moral understanding and can decide for himself f or herself whether what someone else want to do is right or wrong and whether or not to go along with it. The child demonstrates empathy, altruism, confidence, self-esteem, optimism, and faith. He or she recovers from adversities, often feeling stronger, more confident, and 'grown-up.' The child is well equipped to face the challenges of his or her world.

Not all resilient eleven year will have developed all their I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN resilience features to the same degree, but they will all be on their way.

EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Much can be learned from people in other countries and cultures because resilience is a universal capacity. Parents and other caregivers from countries as far removed as Thailand and Russia, Finland and South Africa, Chile and Canada, all respond to the same presented situations with very similar actions. Some responses promote resilience and some do not. No country has an outstanding record of resilience and no country actively destroys or ignores the need for responses to situations that require resilience features. Again, the problem seems to be the lack of knowledge about resilience and how to promote it. The examples provided here came from international research conducted by the author and should be of interest to you.

Situation: A nine year old girl walks to school every day and passes a place where a group of older children stand around. When she passes them, they call to her, make fun of her, and sometimes push her. She has become so frightened she refuses to go to school any more and tells her mother she is sick. Her mother knows she is healthy.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a. "The mother would take the child to the doctor to see if anything was wrong. When nothing was found wrong, the mother would accompany the child to school. The child would confide in her mother the real reason she did not want to go to school. The mother would try to help the child overcome the fear and give her a number of suggestions: ignore the children or walk with some friends. The child would follow the mother's advice, but would feel ashamed if the mother continued to accompany her to school. They also talked about telling what really was going on rather than tell a lie."

Here the mother provided health care, encouraged her child to try ways to handle the problem and acted as a role model ( HAVE); the girl felt loved, has confidence things will be all right and want to feel more autonomous (I AM); and the girl communicates with her mother, even about the lie, wants to manage her own feelings and solve this problem without her mother's continued help (I CAN).

b. "The parents would ask the girl the real reason why she does not want to go to school. They care about the child and are concerned. The child was very happy that her parents asked and she trusted them to help her. She will discuss the problem with them and they will solve it so she can go to school again."

Here the parents show caring and concern for the girl (I HAVE); the girl feels loved and trusts that things will be all right (I AM); and she will communicate with her parents and work on solving the problem (I CAN).

Resilience can be promoted in children in more than one way and behaviors can be changed any time if there is danger of preventing the promotion of resilience.

*Responses that do not promote resilience*

a. "The mother would send her to school and tell her not to be afraid. The child would still be afraid but would go."

In this response, the feelings of the child are not addressed and the child is simply told what she must do, ignoring the problem. The child would feel abandoned and even not loved. This would frighten her more.

b. "The mother would accompany the child to school every day and would feel heart-broken because of the problem. The child went to school unwillingly and felt unhappy. The child would learn to tell the truth."

In this response, the mother makes the child very dependent and weak, by going with her to school every day. Again, the child's feelings are not recognized, particularly that she is unhappy and really doesn't want to face the children on the corner. She is made to feel guilty for not telling the truth and feels she is being punished by the mother.

Here is another situation many parents from around the world responded to. Some of the responses promote resilience and some do not or, indeed, prevent it from developing.

Tina is eleven and Clark is six years old. They are in the house alone. Tina is washing some dishes and Clark is putting his toys away in a box. It is almost time for lunch and they are waiting for their mother to come home. Suddenly, Tina hears Clark scream, "My foot is caught! Oh, it hurts!" Tina rushes to Clark.

*Responses that promote resilience*

a. "The mother would help the girl with her brother when she came home. The girl would be grateful because she was worried about her brother. They would help the brother and then eat lunch."

In this response, the mother offers help and support to both her children (I HAVE); the girl feels empathy for her brother and more autonomous by helping with her brother (I AM); she helps problem solve with her mother, and calms down (I CAN).

b. "The sister would tell her mother what happened and what she did. The sister felt her mother would be angry with her and feel sorry for her brother. The sister would not be punished and the parents would be angry with themselves for not taking good care of the child. The mother would take the boy to the doctor."

In this response, the girl explains what happened and how she tried to help (I CAN); the fear of not being lovable and responsible (I AM) is removed by the parents assuming some responsibility; the family would use health services (I HAVE).

*Responses that do not promote resilience:*

a. "The sister pulled the brother's foot out and called the mother's place of work so she could take the child to the doctor. The sister felt she was to blame for not having watched her brother. The boy felt he was getting into mischief while his sister was washing the dishes. No one knows how it will end."

In this response, the girl tries to solve the problem but feels very guilty. The injured brother also feels guilty. There is no relief from these feelings and no resolution considered.

b. "The parent hit the sister and was very angry. The girl told her parent she would never stay alone with her younger brother again. She felt confused."

In this response, the girls is physically punished and was shown much anger that was not discussed. While the girl retaliated by refusing to stay along with her brother again, she was confused by her mother's reaction. The mother could not talk about her own fear and sense of guilt.

USING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

You probably have been thinking about your own experiences in promoting resilience in the children you have or work with. It may be helpful to you to begin thinking about those experiences in a structured way. You may want to use this form of thinking:

Can you remember a situation you experienced with a child from 8 through 11 that had the potential for promoting resilience in the child or prevent its promotion? (Put our responses in the left hand column of a sheet of paper.)

What was the situation?

What did you do?

How did you feel? What did the child do when you tool that action? How did the child feel?

What was the outcome or how did it end?

After you have done this, look at the ways parents and caregivers can promote resilience in children from 8 through 11 and see if you would change your behavior in any way. Did you provide the I HAVE features and help the child with the I AM and I CAN features of resilience? What dynamics did you use? What would you change if the situation occurred again? (Put your responses in the right hand column.)

# THREE SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

To overcome adversities, children draw from three sources of resilience features labelled. I HAVE, I AM, I CAN. What they draw from each of the three sources may be described as follows:

**I HAVE**

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what

People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble

People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things

People who want me to learn to do things on my own

People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn

**I AM**

A person people can like and love

Glad to do nice things for others and show my concern

Respectful of myself and others

Willing to be responsible for what I do

Sure things will be all right

**I CAN**

Talk to others about things that frighten me or bother me

Find ways to solve problems that I face

Control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous

Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action

Find someone to help me when I need it

# WAYS TO THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE

## 1a. Looking at a constructed situation of an adversity

Two year old Frieda is a market with her parent (caregiver). She grabs some sweets from a tray and begins to put them in her mouth. Her parent tries to take the sweets away because she cannot pay for this treat. Frieda shouts, No! MINE! arches her back and stiffens all over.

What would you do?

How would you feel?

What would the child do when you took that action?

How would the child feel?

What do you think the outcome would be or how would it end?

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

# WAYS TO THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE

## 1b. Looking at a constructed situation of an adversity

Raul is a six year old. He had an accident when he was three and his legs wil not hold his weight any longer. His arms and hands are all right and he uses them all the time. He is building a fence around the piece of wood that he is pretending is the house, and is using small sticks to build with. He has increasing trouble reaching around for the small sticks, and his useless legs keep knocking down parts of the fence. He becomes so frustrated that he begins to throw the small sticks around the room and starts to cry.

What would you do?

How would you feel?

What would the child do when you took that action?

How would the child feel?

What do you think the outcome would be or how would it end?

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

# WAYS TO THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE

## 1c. Looking at a constructed situation of an adversity

Ten year old Rita walks to school every day and passes a place where a group of older children stand around. When she passes them they call to her, make fun of her, and sometimes, push her. She has become so frightened she refuses to go to school any more and tells her mother she is sick. Her mother knows she is healthy.

What would you do?

How would you feel?

What would the child do when you took that action?

How would the child feel?

What do you think the outcome would be or how would it end?

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

WHAT RESILIENCE FEATURES WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE THE CHILD TO USE?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

# WAYS TO THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE

## 2. Looking at an experience of adversity involving a child you were responsible for:

What was the situation?

What did you do?

How did you feel?

What did the child do when you took that action?

How did the child feel?

What was the outcome or how did it end?

WOULD YOU CHANGE WHAT YOU DID IN LIGHT OF RESILIENCE?

What would you change?

What actions would you take to promote resilience?

What resilience features would you encourage your child to use?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

# WAYS TO THINK ABOUT RESILIENCE

## 3. Preparing for a coming adversity

Can you think of an adversity the child will be facing; e.g., moving, losing a loved one, going to the hospital, changing schools? What is it?

How can you prepare the child?

What can you do?

What can you say?

What resilience features would you use?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

What resilience features would you encourage your child to use?

I HAVE I AM I CAN

# FEEDBACK

We would appreciate your comments about this Guide. The revisions we make in the Guide will be the result of your comments. Please send this page to:
Edith H. Grotberg; Suite 1216, 4141 N. Henderson Road, Arlington, VA 22203 USA

1. Is the information clear? Yes No

Comment:

2. Is the format acceptable? Yes No

Comment:

3. Did you read all of the Guide or just parts? All Parts

If you checked Parts, please indicate which parts:

4. Did you have difficulty using the Guide? Yes No

Comment:

5. What changes would make this Guide more useful to you?

Comment:

Please give your overall reaction to the Guide:

Thank you for your Feedback. It will be used.

# How the Guide is Used

We intend to add a section to the Guide that will provide startegies for its use by others. We want to include your experiences - both successes and problems - so that others can learn from you.

Your name will be published as author of your contribution in the added section. Please indicate how you want to be identified: Name:
Title:
Affiliation:

1. With whom did you use the Guide?

2. How did you use it?

3. Did you conduct training sessions? If so, with whom?

4. What do you feel was successful in the ways you used the Guide?

5. How did you present the concept of resilience and the resilience features?

6. How did you present examples of resilience?

7. How did you involve others in describing their experiences?

8. What feedback did you get from those you were working with?

9. What was successful about the way you used the Guide?

10. What was unsuccessful about the way you used the Guide?

11. Do you have suggestions on ways the Guide could be used more effectively?

Other comments: (Write on the back of this, if needed.)

Thank you for helping make this Guide more useful.

Please mail to: Edith Grotberg
Suite 1216,
4141 N. Henderson Road
Arlington, VA 22203 USA

# GUIA DE PROMOCION DE LA RESILIENCIA EN LOS NIÑOS PARA FORTALECER EL ESPIRITU HUMANO

POR

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## I. Introducción

En los últimos años el tema de la "resiliencia" o defensa ante la adversidad ha ido cobrando mayor interés, ya no solo para investigadores, sino para todos los que trabajan en torno al desarrollo de la niñez.

Al mismo tiempo en que se avanza en los conceptos y en la identificación de características del "niño resiliente", se percibe la necesidad de disponer de instrumentos que permitan fortalecer o generar dichas condiciones. Educadores, psicólogos y salubristas empiezan a requerir elementos prácticos para identificar esas características en los niños y para intervenir positivamente promoviendo su desarrollo.

De allí que el Proyecto Internacional de Resiliencia, auspiciado por un conjunto de organismos internacionales ligados a diversos sectores, esté tratando de elaborar guías que permitan incorporar en las actividades cotidianas de los servicios de salud, de las instituciones escolares y en las prácticas familiares de crianza, los elementos de promoción de la resiliencia. De esta manera, los estudios que comenzaron como una inquietud de sectores académicos, están enriqueciendo el arsenal de intervenciones de promoción de salud y desarrollo psicosocial. Esta posibilidad de actuar fortaleciendo factores o condiciones positivas constituye un paso importante en lo que se denomina prevención primordial. Es decir que, mucho antes de la emergencia de una patología o problema, se están tomando acciones para su reducción. La estimulación de la resiliencia humana llegará a ser, sin duda, un importante componente de la promoción de la salud y el desarrollo humano y la edición de estas guías es una primer paso considerable en ese sentido.

## II. Importancia de la resiliencia

La resiliencia es importante porque es la capacidad humana para hacer frente a las adversidades de la vida, superarlas y salir de ellas fortalecido o incluso transformado. Todos nos enfrentamos con adversidades; nadie está exento. Las adversidades pueden suceder fuera del círculo familiar, como robos, guerra, incendios, terremotos, inundaciones, accidentes automovilísticos, pérdida del trabajo, homicidios y hambre. Las adversidades pueden suceder también dentro del círculo familiar, como muerte, divorcio o separación, enfermedad, pobreza, mudanza, malos tratos, abuso sexual, falta de vivienda y homicidio.

La forma en que los padres y otras personas que cuidan a los niños responden a situaciones y la forma en que ayudan a un niño a responder distingue a los adultos que promueven la resiliencia en sus hijos de aquellos que la destruyen o que transmiten mensajes contradictorios que a la vez promueven e inhiben o aplastan la resiliencia.

Hay muchísimos casos de niños y adultos que sufren adversidades en su vida y las superan a pesar de que las circunstancias parezcan indicar que van a terminar abrumados por las adversidades. A continuación se relatan algunas experiencias de la vida real. Usando el modelo de TENGO, SOY/ESTOY, PUEDO se explica lo que hicieron los protagonistas para fomentar la resiliencia a fin de superar la adversidad.

**Un niño de 5 años le dice a su madre lo siguiente cuando vuelve de la escuela:**

**"Este chico está siempre buscando pelea. Me pega y a veces me patea. Le digo que no lo haga, entonces no lo hace durante un rato y después empieza otra vez. Le tengo mucho miedo."**

La madre puede recurrir a las características TENGO personas en derredor en quienes confío y que me quieren incondicionalmente y personas que me ayudan cuando estoy en peligro; puede tratar al niño en una forma que fortalezca las características SOY una persona digna de aprecio y cariño y ESTOY seguro de que todo saldrá bien; las características PUEDO que revisten importancia en esta situación son hablar sobre cosas que me asustan o me inquietan y encontrar a alguien que me ayude cuando lo necesito.

**Entre la madre y el niño hubo la siguiente interacción:**

la madre lo escuchó, le dijo que estaba apenada y lo consoló. Después le dijo que había hecho bien en contarle a la maestra y que lo hiciera cada vez que el otro chico lo molestara, hasta que no sucediera más. Se ofreció para hablar con la maestra o con los padres del otro niño, pero como quería reforzar la independencia de su hijo, no insistió. El niño se sintió con libertad para contar lo que sentía y escuchar las posibles soluciones para el problema. Se dio cuenta de que él mismo formaba parte de la solución y quiso saber qué más podía hacer.

**Otro ejemplo:**

**"Una niña de 11 años estaba cuidando a su hermanito de 3 años cuando la casa se incendió. Trató de apagar el fuego, pero no lo logró. Después trató de llegar adonde estaba su hermano, pero tampoco pudo. Finalmente, salió corriendo de la casa y su hermano murió quemado."**

Aunque se trata de una tragedia familiar, la capacidad de la niña para adquirir resiliencia es fundamental para que pueda superar esta adversidad y otras que se presenten en el futuro. Para eso es indispensable la característica TENGO personas en derredor en quienes confío y que me quieren incondicionalmente. También se aplican a este caso las características ESTOY dispuesto a responsabilizarme de mis actos y ESTOY seguro de que todo saldrá bien, es decir, de que podremos recuperarnos de esta tragedia, sentirnos más fuertes y más empáticos con las personas que sufren. Asimismo, son importantes en esta situación las características PUEDO encontrar a alguien que me ayude cuando lo necesito y hablar sobre cosas que me asustan o me inquietan, o en este caso sobre un suceso devastador.

En cuanto a la interacción con la familia, ésta compartió la tragedia y expresó sentimientos de pesar, pérdida y congoja. Los padres consolaron a la niña y escucharon su explicación de cómo trató de salvar a su hermanito. Se dieron cuenta de que no habían reparado un

tomacorriente averiado, medida que habría evitado el incendio, y asumieron gran parte de la culpa. La familia salió de esta tragedia más unida que nunca y la niña pudo seguir adelante.

**III. Fuentes de Resiliencia: TENGO SOY/ESTOY PUEDO**

Un niño resiliente posee cada una de estas características en abundancia —TENGO, SOY/ESTOY, PUEDO— y puede decir:

**TENGO**

- personas en derredor en quienes confío y que me quieren incondicionalmente
- personas que me ponen límites para que aprenda a evitar los peligros o problemas
- personas que me muestran por medio de su conducta la manera correcta de proceder
- personas que quieren que aprenda a desenvolverme solo
- personas que me ayudan cuando estoy enfermo o en peligro o cuando necesito aprender

**SOY**

- una persona por la que otros sienten aprecio y cariño
- feliz cuando hago algo bueno para los demás y les demuestro mi afecto
- respetuoso de mí mismo y del prójimo

**ESTOY**

- dispuesto a responsabilizarme de mis actos
- seguro de que todo saldrá bien

**PUEDO**

- hablar sobre cosas que me asustan o me inquietan
- buscar la manera de resolver mis problemas
- controlarme cuando tengo ganas de hacer algo peligroso o que no está bien
- buscar el momento apropiado para hablar con alguien o actuar

•encontrar a alguien que me ayude cuando lo necesito

(Estas características de la resiliencia se expondrán en mayor profundidad más adelante, con ejemplos de acciones que las fomentan. Aquí se presentan en forma de declaraciones para describir la resiliencia.)

Un niño resiliente no tiene necesariamente todas estas características, pero tener una sola no basta para que se lo considere resiliente. Un niño puede estar rodeado de afecto (TENGO), pero si no tiene fuerza interior (SOY/ESTOY) o buena disposición para las relaciones sociales o humanas (PUEDO), no es resiliente. Un niño puede tener una gran estimación propia (SOY/ESTOY), pero si no sabe comunicarse con los demás o resolver problemas (PUEDO) y no tiene a nadie que lo ayude, no es resiliente. Un niño puede ser locuaz y hablar bien (PUEDO), pero si no tiene empatía (SOY/ESTOY) o no aprende de los modelos (TENGO), no es resiliente. La resiliencia es el producto de una combinación de estas características.

Estas características de la resiliencia tal vez parezcan obvias y fáciles de adquirir, pero no lo son. De hecho, la mayoría de los niños no son resilientes y la mayoría de los padres y de las demás personas que cuidan a los niños no los ayudan a adquirir resiliencia. Por el contrario, demasiados adultos destruyen u obstruyen la resiliencia de los niños o les transmiten mensajes contradictorios, y demasiados niños se sienten desvalidos y tristes y sienten que no los quieren del todo. Esta situación no es necesariamente premeditada; lo que ocurre es que la gente no sabe qué es la resiliencia ni cómo fomentarla en los niños.

Los niños necesitan adquirir resiliencia para superar las numerosas adversidades que encuentran y encontrarán en su camino, y no pueden hacerlo solos. Necesitan adultos que sepan fomentar la resiliencia y que, de hecho, estén volviéndose más resilientes.

**IV. Utilidad de esta Guía**

El propósito de esta guía es ayudarle en la difícil pero interesante tarea de fomentar la resiliencia en sus hijos. Usted, igual que la mayoría de los padres y de las personas que cuidan niños, quiere que sus hijos puedan afrontar la adversidad, superarla y salir de ella fortalecidos o incluso transformados por la experiencia. Algunas adversidades pueden evitarse, pero todos sufren adversidades en la vida, ya sea en situaciones de crisis o en forma crónica. El niño resiliente puede recurrir a la fuerza interior (SOY/ESTOY) que usted le ayude a adquirir, puede recurrir a la habilidad con las relaciones sociales y humanas (PUEDO) que usted le ayude a cultivar, y puede recurrir a los medios y al apoyo que usted u otros le brinden (TENGO).

Los niños no son independientes de su entorno. Están en el ámbito de una familia, de una escuela, de una comunidad y de la sociedad en general. Aunque es mucho lo que se podría decir sobre el fomento de la resiliencia en padres, maestros, comunidades y sociedades, esta guía se centra en el fomento de la resiliencia de los niños. Los padres, maestros,

comunidades y sociedades son indispensables para fomentar la resiliencia de los niños, de modo que la atención está dirigida al niño, pero en su medio.

Esta guía le ayudará a aprender métodos para fomentar la resiliencia de sus hijos. A ellos, les ayudará a fomentar diversos aspectos de su propia resiliencia. Usted aprenderá que, para fomentar la resiliencia, hay que recurrir a distintas combinaciones de las características de la resiliencia y cambiar las combinaciones si una no parece dar resultado. Encontrará más información sobre los actos relacionados con características de resiliencia y ejemplos de respuestas resilientes y no resilientes de adultos y niños a la misma situación. Por último, se presentará esta información organizada para tres grupos de distintas edades: los primeros tres años de vida, de 4 a 7 años y de 8 a 12 años. Podrá remitirse al grupo de la edad que le interese, o quizá tanto usted como sus hijos encuentren interesante leer la información correspondiente a cada edad. Cada niño madura a un ritmo diferente, de modo que cierta información podría ser apropiada para niños menores o mayores que los del grupo de su misma edad cronológica. Sin embargo, un factor que todos los grupos tienen en común es que el niño es el indicador de si usted está fomentando la resiliencia en una medida mayor de lo que el niño puede asimilar, si el niño se siente cómodo con lo que usted está haciendo, si lo comprende o si está aprendiendo lo que usted le enseña e inculca. La respuesta del niño es la guía y el criterio orientador con respecto a la eficacia de lo que el padre u otra persona encargada del cuidado del niño está haciendo para fomentar la resiliencia.

**El niño desde el nacimiento hasta los 3 años**

Desde el nacimiento hasta los 3 años, los niños van aprendiendo sobre la confianza y la autonomía. Aprenden a confiar en las personas que los cuidan como fuentes de cariño, ayuda y cuidados cuando tienen hambre, cuando están mojados, cuando necesitan afecto y consuelo, cuando están asustados o enojados. Los pequeñines aprenden a confiar en su propia capacidad para adoptar un ritmo de comidas, sueño, aseo, etc., y a calmarse y a controlar mejor su cuerpo.

Aprenden a cambiar de posición, pararse, caminar, jugar y usar las manos para manipular y crear. Se van dando cuenta de que son otra persona y tratan de hacer muchas cosas por su cuenta, causando a menudo gran preocupación y frustración a las personas que los cuidan.

Los errores pueden ser una experiencia educativa o vergonzosa para los niños de hasta 3 años. Si no aprenden a desenvolverse y si las personas que los cuidan no los ayudan, estos pequeñines aprenden a no confiar en sí mismos, en los encargados de su cuidado y en el resto del mundo. Si no adquieren autonomía, si no les permiten que cometan errores o si los critican por tratar de hacer las cosas a su manera, se sentirán avergonzados y comenzarán a dudar de sus aptitudes.

Esos son los límites y el marco en los cuales sus hijos pequeños pueden adquirir resiliencia. Son también los límites dentro de los cuales deben trabajar los padres y otras

personas encargadas del cuidado de los niños para fomentar la resiliencia de los niños durante los primeros tres años de vida. Tal vez sea útil describir las características de la resiliencia de los niños de 3 años, sugerir lo que pueden hacer las personas que los cuidan para fomentar la resiliencia, presentar ejemplos de acciones que fomentan la resiliencia y de acciones que no la fomentan, y por último describir un niño de 3 años resiliente.

**Características de la resiliencia de los niños de 3 años**

Las características de la resiliencia TENGO, SOY/ESTOY y PUEDO que figuran al comienzo de la guía se presentan principalmente en forma de declaraciones, y no por medio de acciones, sentimientos y experiencias del niño. Sería útil explicar esas características en mayor profundidad, abarcando las acciones, los sentimientos y las experiencias del niño. Por consiguiente, a continuación se explica cada característica de la resiliencia, acompañada de las acciones, los sentimientos y las experiencias correspondientes del niño.

**TENGO**

•personas en derredor en quienes confío y que me quieren incondicionalmente

•Mis padres y otras personas que me cuidan me demuestran afecto sosteniéndome en brazos, besándome, acunándome y diciéndome que me quieren mucho. Están contentos cuando estoy contento y me consuelan cuando estoy triste. Puedo confiar en ellos porque están a mi lado cuando los necesito y no me hacen daño, no me hacen sufrir ni permiten que nadie lo haga.

•personas que me ponen límites para que aprenda a evitar los peligros o problemas

•Mis padres u otras personas que se encargan de cuidarme han fijado el horario para comer, bañarme, ir a dormir y hacer la siesta. La rutina cambia sólo cuando es necesario o para variar. Sé lo que no debo tocar. Sé también que no puedo golpear o morder a nadie y que debo obedecer las reglas y seguir la rutina. Conozco las consecuencias de la desobediencia, pero no me hacen daño ni me humillan para disciplinarme. En cambio, generalmente me privan de algo que me gusta o que quiero hacer. Estar solo un rato parece dar resultado, porque me calmo y reflexiono sobre lo que he hecho. Mis padres me ayudan a comprender lo que hice mal, me perdonan y todos volvemos a ser felices.

•personas que me muestran por medio de su conducta la manera correcta de proceder

•Mis padres y las demás personas que me cuidan me enseñan a hacer tareas de la casa. A veces ayudo a preparar la comida o a poner la mesa. También me enseñan a comportarme bien con las visitas y me dicen lo que puedo hacer cuando estoy solo o con mi familia pero no delante de otras personas. Me enseñan a reconocer mis sentimientos y a expresar algunos de ellos. Me demuestran que son justos y honestos con el prójimo y creen en la rectitud. Es posible que me lleven a un lugar de culto.

•personas que quieren que aprenda a desenvolverme solo

•Mis padres me enseñan a comer, a lavarme las manos y a vestirme. Me elogian cuando hago todo eso solo. Esperan que pida lo que necesito y que cuide lo que tengo. Me alientan para que explore la casa o en mi derredor y me instan a que siga tratando cuando me asusto un poco o dudo. Mis padres me ayudan a calmarme cuando estoy demasiado agitado o frustrado.

•personas que me ayudan cuando estoy enfermo o en peligro o cuando necesito aprender

•Mis padres me llevan al médico, a un consultorio o a alguien que sepa de salud cuando estoy enfermo o necesito una vacuna. Me llevan a un preescolar o a una guardería si quieren y si hay uno disponible. Piden ayuda a los servicios sociales o a una persona competente si tengo un problema, y saben que no corro peligro porque la policía y otros protegen a nuestra familia.

**SOY**

•una persona por la que otros sienten aprecio y cariño

•Mis padres y otras personas me dicen que me quieren y sonríen cuando me ven llegar. Estoy contento la mayor parte del tiempo; puedo saltar, bailar y reírme. Me gusta jugar y divertirme. A veces me gusta acurrucarme, que me tengan en brazos y abrazar a la gente. No permanezco enojado o triste durante mucho tiempo.

•feliz cuando hago algo bueno para los demás y les muestro mi afecto

•Le doy un juguete a mi mamá o a un amigo cuando están tristes. Lloro cuando mi hermana llora y trato de consolarla dándole algo mío. Les digo a mis padres que los quiero y les llevo lo que me piden. Me gusta ayudar a la gente para que sepan que les tengo afecto.

•respetuoso de mí mismo y del prójimo

•Estoy seguro de que puedo comer y vestirme solo. Sé que puedo construir una casa o un camino de juguete y estoy orgulloso de lo que puedo lograr. No trato de hacerme daño y no quiero que los demás me traten mal. Respeto a los demás y respeto sus sentimientos, y no quiero hacerles nada malo. Siento aprecio por mí mismo y puedo hacerme amigo de otros niños.

**ESTOY**

•dispuesto a responsabilizarme de mis actos

•Hago todo lo que puedo solo y sé lo que esperan de mí. Trato de hacer las cosas de la forma en que me enseñaron. Me siento bien cuando hago las cosas bien por mi cuenta y me siento triste cuando hago las cosas mal o me porto mal. Sé que lo que hago influye en el resultado y que soy responsable de mis actos.

•seguro de que todo saldrá bien

•Estoy convencido de que todo saldrá bien. Aguardo con entusiasmo cada nuevo día. Estoy aprendiendo a distinguir lo bueno de lo malo, lo que debo hacer y lo que no debo hacer. Confío en las personas que están conmigo.

**PUEDO**

•hablar sobre cosas que me asustan o me inquietan

•Puedo mostrar a alguien lo que quiero o pedirlo con palabras. A menudo puedo decirle a alguien cómo me siento. Estoy aprendiendo a escuchar lo que dice otra persona, a percatarme de lo que siente, y a responder de manera tal que nos entendamos y no nos ofendamos.

•buscar la manera de resolver mis problemas .

•A veces entiendo los problemas que surgen cuando estoy vistiéndome o haciendo otra cosa. Con frecuencia puedo concentrarme en un problema hasta que lo resuelvo, o incluso sé cuándo necesito ayuda y la pido. Estoy aprendiendo a pedir ayuda cuando tengo problemas con un amigo que no quiere turnarse o compartir.

•controlarme cuando tengo ganas de hacer algo peligroso o que no está bien

•Estoy comenzando a expresar con palabras algunos de mis sentimientos y sé cuándo tengo ciertos sentimientos. De a poco, me doy cuenta de que puedo calmarme. Trato de no hacer cosas que sean peligrosas para mí o para los demás y de pensar qué ocurrirá si hago ciertas cosas. Estoy aprendiendo un poco sobre causa y efecto.

•buscar el momento apropiado para hablar con alguien o actuar

•Al observar a mis padres, me estoy dando cuenta de quién actúa enseguida y quién reflexiona durante mucho tiempo. Estoy comenzando a saber quién actuará, correrá riesgos y probará algo nuevo, y quién será precavido y cuidadoso y tendrá en cuenta todas las posibilidades. Estoy aprendiendo a conocerme y a conocer mi temperamento. Para eso necesito ayuda.

•encontrar a alguien que me ayude cuando lo necesito

•Sé que puedo confiar en las personas que me cuidan y estoy aprendiendo que puedo confiar en otros también. Puedo recurrir a ellos cuando necesito ayuda, cuando estoy triste o cuando necesito hablar. Estoy dispuesto a pedirles ayuda y a acudir a ellos.

Estas son las características de la resiliencia de los niños de 3 años. Estos niños han tenido muchas experiencias y gran ayuda de las personas que los rodean para adquirir y cultivar estas características de la resiliencia durante los primeros tres años de su vida. Algunos ejemplos de experiencias que podrían haber tenido y de respuestas que fomentarían la resiliencia o impedirían su desarrollo ayudarán a colocar estas características en una perspectiva dinámica y funcional.

**Ejemplos de acciones que fomentan la resiliencia y de acciones que no la fomentan**

La situación es la siguiente:

- El bebé está en la cuna, boca arriba, llorando y pataleando. Usted no sabe qué le pasa. El bebé simplemente sigue llorando y pataleando.

- Usted fomenta la resiliencia si lo levanta en brazos y comienza a calmarlo mientras trata de determinar si está mojado, si tiene frío o calor, si necesita unas palmaditas en la espalda para eructar o si simplemente necesita que lo tranquilicen (TENGO). Si le hace sentir que lo quieren y lo cuidan (SOY/ESTOY), lo ayudará a calmarse (PUEDO).

- Usted no fomenta la resiliencia si lo mira, decide cambiarle los pañales y después le dice que deje de llorar. Si no deja de llorar, usted se va y lo deja que llore hasta que se canse. Esta interacción no fomenta la resiliencia, puesto que el bebé necesita algo más que pañales limpios. Necesita que lo levanten en brazos y que lo tranquilicen para que sepa que lo quieren y que lo cuidan. Entonces se calmará.

He aquí otra situación:

- Usted está en el supermercado con su hija de 2 años. Ella ve una golosina, la toma y comienza a comerla. Cuando usted trata de quitársela, ella grita: "¡No! ¡Mía, mía!"

- Usted fomenta la resiliencia si la lleva aparte para no molestar a los demás y le explica calmadamente que no puede tomar nada sin su permiso y le da o le muestra otra cosa para distraerla. Le ayuda a comprender los límites de la conducta (TENGO), le ayuda a hacerse responsable de su propia conducta (SOY/ESTOY) y se comunica con ella mientras ella la escucha (PUEDO).

- Usted no fomenta la resiliencia si simplemente la deja que se coma la golosina o si le pega y la regaña o si le abre la mano por la fuerza y le quita la golosina. Una interacción

de este tipo hará que la niña tema a la persona que constituye su fuente de afecto y confianza, que adopte una conducta rígida y que sienta que no la quieren y que no la comprenden.

**¿Qué pueden hacer los padres y otras personas que se encargan del cuidado de los niños para fomentar su resiliencia?**

Durante los primeros tres años de vida de un niño, los padres y otras personas que los cuidan pueden hacer muchas cosas para fomentar la resiliencia de los pequeñines, a fin de que un niño de 3 años tenga mayores probabilidades de adquirir algunas de las características de la resiliencia que se han descrito. Esas características son ciertamente metas meritorias. Los padres y otras personas que cuidan a los niños pueden hacer lo siguiente:

Brindarles cariño incondicional y expresar afecto en forma física y verbal, sosteniéndolos en brazos, acunándolos y acariciándolos; tranquilizarlos con palabras dulces y ayudarlos a calmarse.

Obligar a los niños de 2 ó 3 años a cumplir las reglas; para disciplinarlos, quitarles privilegios y usar otros métodos que no los humillen, que no les hagan daño y que no los hagan sentirse rechazados.

Comportarse de una forma que comunique confianza, optimismo y buenos resultados, a fin de que sirva de modelo para los niños de 2 ó 3 años.

Elogiar a los niños de 2 ó 3 años por sus progresos, como usar el baño, calmarse, hablar o hacer algo.

Impulsar a los niños de 2 ó 3 años para que prueben cosas y traten de hacer cosas por su cuenta, con ayuda mínima de los adultos.

Cuando se vaya desarrollando el lenguaje, reconocer los sentimientos del niño y darles nombres. Impulsar al niño para que reconozca y exprese sus propios sentimientos y para que reconozca algunos sentimientos en los demás (por ejemplo, triste, contento, arrepentido, feliz, enojado).

Preparar al niño de alrededor de 3 años para situaciones desagradables o adversas —gradualmente, si es posible— hablándole al respecto, leyéndole libros, escenificando situaciones, etc.

Cuando se vaya desarrollando el lenguaje, usarlo para reforzar características de la resiliencia que ayuden al niño a afrontar la adversidad. Por ejemplo, una frase como "Sé que puedes hacerlo" fomenta la autonomía y refuerza la fe del niño en su capacidad para resolver problemas, y decirle "Estoy aquí" lo tranquiliza y le recuerda las relaciones de confianza con las cuales puede contar.

Ser conscientes de su propio temperamento y del temperamento del niño a fin de determinar con qué celeridad o lentitud pueden introducir cambios, cuánto pueden empujarlo, alentarlo, etc., y cuánta paciencia tienen todos.

**Dinámica del fomento de la resiliencia**

Es importante fomentar la resiliencia usando la dinámica de las características de la resiliencia, en vez de fomentar una por vez. Para eso hay que hacer lo siguiente:

- Lograr un equilibrio entre la libertad para explorar y las salvaguardias para evitar riesgos.

- Cuando se vaya desarrollando el lenguaje, combinar las explicaciones y la reconciliación con las reglas y la disciplina.

- Tranquilizar y alentar al niño en situaciones estresantes.

- Proporcionar un medio estable para el niño muy pequeño, pero introducir algunas novedades para el niño de 2 ó 3 años: experiencias, gente y lugares nuevos y cambios de rutina.

- Cambiar y modificar la combinación de libertad y seguridad, explicaciones y disciplina, ayuda y autonomía, etc., para el niño de 2 ó 3 años según sus reacciones.

**Retrato de un niño de 3 años resiliente**

Un niño de 3 años resiliente está seguro del cariño de sus padres y está convencido de que sus necesidades serán satisfechas. El niño tiene libertad para explorar y probar cosas nuevas, pero sabe que hay reglas cuya infracción acarrea claras consecuencias. El niño se siente cómodo con la rutina diaria y le encanta aprender a hacer cosas en forma independiente. El niño siente que inspira cariño y está orgulloso de su progreso. El niño puede manifestar su afecto por los demás por medio de sentimientos y acciones. El niño está aprendiendo a usar palabras y a controlar su conducta y sus impulsos. Está aprendiendo a resolver problemas y a comprender la forma en que tiende a reaccionar frente a distintas situaciones. Estas características son difíciles de adquirir, pero el niño puede acudir a adultos de confianza para que lo ayuden.

**Ejemplos de todo el mundo**

La resiliencia es una capacidad universal y se manifiesta en todo el mundo. Los padres y las personas que cuidan a los niños en países tan alejados como Tailandia, Sudáfrica, Chile y Canadá responden a las mismas situaciones con acciones muy similares. Algunas respuestas fomentan la resiliencia y otras no. Ningún país tiene una trayectoria sobresaliente de resiliencia y ninguna actividad de un país destruye o pasa por alto la necesidad de responder

a situaciones que requieren características de resiliencia. Una vez más, el problema parece ser la falta de conocimiento de la resiliencia y de la forma de cultivarla. Los ejemplos que se presentan a continuación han sido extraídos de investigaciones internacionales realizadas por uno de los autores, y con toda seguridad le resultarán interesantes.

**Situación:** Joella, de 10 meses, está gateando en el suelo. Encuentra un trapo sucio y comienza a morderlo y a chuparlo. La persona que la cuida la ve y sabe que el trapo está muy sucio y puede causarle una infección.

**Respuestas que fomentan la resiliencia**

a. "La madre reemplaza el trapo sucio con uno limpio y le dice al bebé que el otro trapo estaba sucio. La niña deja que su madre reemplace el trapo sucio con uno limpio y se queda contenta porque le dieron algo para reemplazar el trapo que había encontrado."

   Con su respuesta, la madre no irrita al bebé. En cambio, cambia el trapo sucio por uno limpio y le habla al bebé calmadamente para que confíe (TENGO) en su madre y se calme. El bebé continúa jugando y explorando el entorno (PUEDO) con confianza (SOY/ESTOY).

b. "La persona que cuida a la niña le quita el trapo y se enoja. La niña llora entristecida porque quería el trapo. La madre le da un trapo limpio y la abraza."

   Frente a esta situación, la persona que cuida a la niña le quita el trapo y se enoja. La niña responde con llanto y tristeza. En ese momento, la persona que la cuida cambia la forma en que estaba manejando la situación: busca un trapo limpio y abraza al bebé (TENGO). De esta forma, la niña se calma (PUEDO), siente que la quieren (SOY/ESTOY) y continúa jugando.

Hay más de una forma de promover la resiliencia en los niños. Además, se puede cambiar la manera de proceder en cualquier momento si existe el peligro de no fomentar la resiliencia.

He aquí algunas respuestas a la misma situación que no promueven la resiliencia:

a. "La madre corre hasta la niña, le dice que el trapo está sucio y se lo quita de la boca. La madre está asustada. La niña deja que la madre le quite el trapo y no muestra ningún sentimiento. No se pone más el trapo en la boca."

   La respuesta de la madre está motivada por su propio temor de que la niña contraiga una infección; la madre no se da cuenta de que la niña es pasiva y cede.

b. "No sé. Ella toma al bebé en brazos y no siente nada. El bebé se duerme."

Tanto la madre como el bebé responden en forma pasiva. No hay aprendizaje ni comunicación.

He aquí otra situación a la cual respondieron muchos padres en todo el mundo. Algunas de las respuestas fomentan la resiliencia; otras, no, e incluso impiden su desarrollo.

- Jason tiene 2 años y medio. Se supone que coma la poca comida que hay para él. Es importante que coma para sobrevivir y crecer. Sin embargo, no quiere comer, y cuando le dicen que coma, se tira al suelo y comienza a gritar y patalear en medio de un berrinche monumental.

**Respuestas que fomentan la resiliencia**

- "La madre toma al niño en brazos y lo calma. Después le explica por qué tiene que comer y qué hay para comer. Le dice que preparó lo mismo para ella y para él a fin de que puedan comer juntos. El niño llega a la conclusión de que, si la madre come lo mismo, él no puede negarse a comer. Está contento de que la madre no lo obligue a comer ni insista demasiado en que coma. No necesita irritarse o preocuparse por la comida. Disfrutan juntos de la comida."

- La madre responde con amor y afecto (TENGO) y comienza a comunicarse con el niño (PUEDO). El niño no se asusta ni siente que se ha portado mal, sino que se siente feliz porque lo quieren y porque se responsabiliza de sus actos (SOY/ESTOY).

Otra respuesta a la misma situación que fomenta la resiliencia:

- "La madre lleva al niño al médico para que lo examinen y se pone contenta cuando le dicen que al niño no le pasa nada. El niño termina comiendo porque no quiere que lo lleven al médico. De esta forma, comerá y crecerá."

- Al responder, la madre acude a los servicios de salud para ver si hay algún problema (TENGO). El niño se da cuenta de que lo que hace o deja de hacer acarrea consecuencias (SOY/ESTOY) y aprende lo que tiene que hacer para que no lo lleven al médico (PUEDO).

He aquí algunas respuestas a la misma situación que no fomentan la resiliencia:

- "La madre se enoja y discute con el niño. Había preparado un buen plato, pero el niño se niega a comerlo. Insiste, fastidiada, y el niño se empaca. Considera que su madre es fastidiosa. La madre castiga al niño, pero éste sigue sin comer. La madre se cansa y se da por vencida."

•La madre responde principalmente a su propio enojo. Trata de obligar al niño a hacer algo que no quiere y no comprende por qué el niño no quiere comer. Se da por vencida más por frustración que por cualquier atisbo de comprensión de lo que pasa con su hijo.

**Otra respuesta que no fomenta la resiliencia:**

•"La madre discute con el niño, le da una paliza y le dice que coma. La madre se siente inútil y sufre porque tiene que castigar al niño por el berrinche. El niño se asusta y comienza a llorar. Siente que lo han agraviado y que no lo quieren. El niño aprenderá a respetar y a ser obediente, y no dará más berrinches."

•La madre responde con un castigo, a pesar de que sabe que hará sufrir al niño. Parece que la madre no sabe qué hacer, pero considera que la situación representa una amenaza para su control y, por lo tanto, debe imponer un castigo para restablecer el control. Lo único que aprende el niño es a temer el castigo y a no esperar que lo comprendan.

**Uso de la experiencia personal**

Probablemente usted haya pensado en su propia experiencia con el fomento de la resiliencia de sus hijos o de los niños que están a su cuidado. Sería útil que reflexionara sobre su experiencia en forma estructurada. Podría hacerlo de esta forma:

¿Recuerda usted alguna situación en la cual se haya encontrado con un niño de hasta 3 años y en la cual se haya planteado la posibilidad de fomentar la resiliencia del bebé o impedir su desarrollo? (Coloque sus respuestas en la columna de la izquierda).

**¿Cuál fue la situación?**

**¿Qué hizo usted?**

**¿Cómo se sintió?**

**¿Qué hizo el niño cuando usted respondió de esa forma?**

**¿Cómo se sintió el niño?**

**¿Cuál fue el desenlace?**

Después, examine la forma en que los padres y las personas que cuidan niños pueden fomentar la resiliencia de los niños de hasta 3 años y determine si usted lo haría de manera diferente. ¿Cultivó usted las características TENGO y ayudó al niño con las características de la resiliencia SOY/ESTOY y PUEDO? ¿Qué dinámica usó? ¿Qué cambiaría si se planteara de nuevo la misma situación?

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